

L O U N G E R.

[N^o LXXVI.]

Saturday, July 15. 1786.

THIS day's Paper I devote to correspondents. The first of the following letters I was particularly desirous to insert soon, as its subject is of that transient kind which might suffer from delay. In drets, as well as in character, there is often, in these times of change, "the *Cynthia* of the minute."

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

S I R,

Edinburgh, July 6. 1786.

I Understand that gentlemen who formerly held the same sort of office which you now exercise among us, were in use to appoint certain deputies, to whom they committed particular departments. As you, Sir, seem now to be so well established in yours, that you may possibly think of following their example, I make bold to solicit an appointment, or, failing of that, your patronage at least to an undertaking, of which this town seems to stand much in need, and for which I flatter myself I am tolerably well qualified.

One of your extensive observation, Mr Lounger, must have remarked, how defective we are in point of general or early information in drets, and how long it is before we accommodate ourselves universally to that perfect standard which the metropolis of England affords. We are often miserably in the rear of the fashion; and, except one or two favoured Ladies, who have been accidentally in London, the bulk of our fine women don't get into the mode till it is quite upon the wane among our southern neighbours. The *Ostrich* head did not make its appearance here till half a season after it had been worn in London. The other end of the ostrich was still later of reaching us. That was indeed partly owing to an accident; the first set (as it is a bulky article), was coming down by sea in a ship that was wrecked, and a friend of mine, who had the merit of the first commission, lost considerably in bottomry on the vessel. At this very moment, I see pass my door a great many Brimstone ribbons, though it is two months since my letters from London informed me they were quite out there. As long ago as the *Commemoration*, there were none but *Celestials* present, not a single *Brimstone* in the Abbey.

This inconvenience, Sir, might easily be remedied by a speedier communication of intelligence between the capitals of England and of Scotland, more especially if a public appointment were made of some person from whom such intelligence could here be obtained, and who should be answerable for its authenticity. 'Tis for this office, Mr Lounger, I venture to propose myself. I have been at a good deal of pains, Sir, to establish such a correspondence at London, and even at Paris, as I trust will enable me to supply myself, not only with intelligence, but

with *models* of every article of Dress, as soon as it grows into confirmed fashion; and I will take care to exhibit at certain stated seasons a set of *Poupées*, which I flatter myself will convey from my shop-window a perfect idea of the reigning dress and undress of the fashionable world. At present, the little figures which are stationed there are looked on merely as toys for children; but I hereby give notice that, with your leave, Mr Lounger, I shall, on the first day of the ensuing race-week, convert them to a more dignified as well as a more useful purpose; that they will then represent, on one side of my window, a set of fashionably dressed gentlemen, and on the other, a party of fashionably dressed ladies.

There never, I imagine, Sir, was a period when such a standard was of so much importance in this country. The proportion of the value of dress to that of the wearer, particularly in the Fair Sex, is wonderfully increased of late years in Edinburgh. Of the first I think I am a tolerably good judge, and can estimate, I believe, within a few shillings, (supposing the underworks to be of the ordinary materials), the value of any lady's apparel. Of the value of the lady herself I do not pretend to be a judge: in some instances within my little experience I have observed the estimate to differ considerably at two different periods, as it happened to be made by the lover or the husband; at the first, they bore a premium, as we say in business; at the latter, there was rather a discount. But taking things at an average, I am told, our mothers and grandmothers were as precious in themselves as our wives and daughters. But as for their covering, there is, in all ranks, a great increase of cost, even in my time: for though the old *Points* and *Brocades* came high at first, they went through generations, like an entailed estate; our dress has as much the advantage in variety as in elegance; it does not outlast a Lady's fancy. 'Twas but t'other morning I sold some of my *Bloom of Roses* to the wife of a grocer of my acquaintance, who looked at some of my toys from beneath a bonnet that must have stood her in a couple of guineas at the least; yet were she to be set up to auction—but I wish to avoid all personal reflections, Mr Lounger.

You, Sir, who understand such subjects, might perhaps wish to correct the disproportion between apparel and station, between the gaudiness of dress, and the age and character of the wearer: I only pretend to regulate it according to the mode, or perhaps a little according to the complexion. In both I see the greatest mistakes at present. There is a lamentable neglect among us of all propriety in that matter. We are ill informed even of the names of the articles we wear. People come to years of discretion scarce know the difference between a plain Hat and a *Lunardi*; and I have heard a Lady, who I was told had a very good education, mistake a *Parachute* for a *Fitzherbert*.

Besides the knowledge of dress in the abstract, Mr Lounger, there is another branch of instruction, which lies, if I may presume to say so, in the middle between your province and mine, that is, the art of making the most of one's self in one's dress, after one has got it on. I believe, Sir, I can find an assistant who will undertake this department; who can teach the Ladies the smart toss suitable to the new-fashioned turned-up hat, the languish of eye that is to be practised under the curtain of the *Lunardi*, and the hoydenish roll that becomes the *Laitiere*;

tiere; and in the same way, who will shew the gentlemen the lolling air that suits the open waistcoat and slender switch, and the fierce one that accords with the knotted neckcloth, and short thick bludgeon. In the mean time, however, I shall content myself with exhibiting my figures in a quiet state: if I meet with suitable encouragement, I may, with my friend's assistance, turn them into *Automata*, and teach them to go through their exercise after the most approved method.

I have the honour to be, with great respect, your most obedient and most humble servant,

W. JENKIN.

I own I was a little surprised at the style of Mr Jenkin's letter, till, turning over the leaf, I found a postscript, in which (after urging a plea of favour on account of the late imposition of the perfumery-tax, which was to take place the very day his letter is dated) he candidly acknowledges, that the substance only of that letter is his own, but that his proposal was put into shape by a neighbour and customer of his. I am perfectly satisfied of the usefulness of his plan; and as far as I may assume any jurisdiction in the matter, am extremely willing to invest him with the appointment in question, provided the gentleman who wrote his letter continues to act as his secretary.

As to his proposal of teaching young Ladies and Gentlemen the *exercise* of dress, I shall take time to consider of it. At present, I am rather inclined to believe it unnecessary. I think he does my countrymen and countrywomen injustice in supposing them to require instruction in that particular. On some late field-days, or rather field-evenings, at which I happened to be present, I have seen some of them go through their evolutions in a very masterly and mistressly manner.

The second letter was left at my Editor's, as the shop-boy informed Mr Creech, by a short round-faced gentleman, who seemed, when he gave it in, to be very much out of humour.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

S I R,

I Can't help complaining to you of a grievance which I do not remember to have seen taken notice of, at least not exactly in the way it affects me, in any treatise on Conversation.

Here in the coffeehouse I frequent (and you, for aught I know, may have often witnessed the thing in your proper person) is one Mr *Glib*, who is the greatest *questioner* I ever met with in the whole course of my life. This, however, though plague enough of itself, is but half the injury of which we have to complain from him. Mr Glib, Sir, not content with the question, always takes the answer upon him likewise; so that it is impossible to get in a word. I shall illustrate my meaning by giving you, *verbatim*, his conversation this morning. He came in wiping his forehead, and, as I hoped, out of breath; but he was scarcely seated when he began as usual: "Mercy on us! how hot it is! Boy, fetch me a glass of Port and water. Dr *Phlogiston*, did you observe what the thermometer stood at this morning? Mine was
" at

“ at 76 in the shade—Well, this has cleared my throat of the dust a little—What a dust there is in the New Town! Gentlemen, were any of you in Prince’s Street since breakfast? I went to call on a friend who lives at the farther side of the Square, and I had like to have been smother’d.—Sir John, how were you entertain’d at the play last night? *Mrs Pope’s* playing was admirable. Were not you amaz’d at the thinness of the house? But fashion, not taste, rules every thing. Give the women but a croud within, and a squeeze at the door, and they don’t care a pin for the excellence of the entertainment.—Captain *Paragraph*, how long is it since the post came in? I got my paper about an hour ago.—When is it thought Parliament will rise? I have a letter that says the 12th.—Mr *M’Blubber*, you are a Highlander, what is your opinion of those encouragements to the fishery? I have no great notion of building towns; find the birds, say I, and they will find nests to themselves.—Mr *Rupee*, (you have been in India), what do you say to this impeachment? I am inclined to think it will come to nothing.—Pray, what is the exact definition of a *bulse*? I understand it to be a package for diamonds, as a *rouleau* is for guineas.—Ha! is not that Mr Hazard walking yonder, who came yesterday from London? Yes it is, I know him by his gait.—Sir, is my cane any where near you? Oh! yes, I left it in the corner of the box.—Boy, how much did I owe the house since yesterday? Eighteen-pence. Here it is.”

Now, Mr Lounger, you must be satisfied what an aggravated offence this way of talking of Mr Glib’s is, against other people who wish to have some share in the conversation. The most unconscionable querists, if they keep within their own department, are contented with half the talk of the company: Mr Glib cuts it in two, and very modestly helps himself to both pieces. When he has set the fancy agog, and one’s tongue is just ready to give it vent, pop, he comes between one and the game he has started, and takes the word out of one’s mouth. Do write a few lines, Sir, to let Mr Glib know how unreasonable and how ridiculous his behaviour is; ’tis as if one should play at *shuttlecock* alone, or take a game at *piquet*, one’s right hand against one’s left, or sit down with three *dead men* at *whist*.—I should never have done, were I to say all I think of its absurdity.

I am a married man, Mr Lounger, and have a wife and three grown up daughters at home. I am a pretty constant frequenter of the coffeehouse, where I go to have the pleasure of a little conversation; but if Mr Glib is to come there every morning as he does at present, never to have done asking questions, and never to allow any body but himself to answer them, I may just as well stay at home.

Your’s, &c.

GABRIEL GOSSIP.

Before I stir further in this matter, Mr Gossip will be kind enough to inform me, whether it would satisfy him, if Mr Glib were allowed to ask questions, and he, Mr Gossip, to answer them, for all the rest of the coffeehouse.

EDINBURGH:

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